

H-France Salon
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Introduction

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Natalie Zemon Davis turned ninety on November 9, 2018. Wishing to celebrate her long and distinguished career, the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies at Princeton University and the School of Historical Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) hosted a workshop in her honor on April 26, 2019. This volume collects the papers delivered by former colleagues and friends on that occasion, including Davis’s closing reflections on “Doing History at 90.”

One of the most creative and influential historians of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Davis spent nearly two decades in Princeton. As we learned on the eve of the workshop, she first lived in Princeton in 1957–58 with her husband, Chandler Davis, when he was a Member of the School of Mathematics at IAS. After teaching briefly at Brown University and for several years at the University of California at Berkeley, she planted her academic roots in Princeton. She first returned to IAS as a Member of the School of Social Science in January 1978. Six months later, she joined the Department of History at Princeton University, where she trained numerous graduate students, mentored junior colleagues, and succeeded Lawrence Stone as the second director of the Davis Center. In those years, she developed lasting intellectual collaborations and friendships, and wrote some of her landmark works: *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983), *Fictions in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (1987), and *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (1995). She retired in 1996 as the Henry Charles Lea Professor of History Emerita and has since been affiliated with the University of Toronto.

In considering how to structure the workshop (and, as a result, this volume), we had no intention of being comprehensive. In fact, we opted for maximum flexibility. A previous gathering at Harvard University, organized to coincide with Davis's eightieth birthday in 2008, had assembled a great many students and colleagues.¹ Our endeavor was on a smaller scale and aimed to be more local. We invited six speakers with close ties to Davis and to Princeton: Peter Brown, Lorraine Daston, Anthony Grafton, William Chester Jordan, Joan Wallach Scott, and Bonnie Smith.² We gave them no direction, no task, no assignment. We simply asked each of them to speak for twenty minutes, addressing any topic and adopting whatever presentation style they wished. The resulting diversity of content, approach, and tone is reflected in the papers collected here. That this uncoordinated plan yielded such an incredibly rich and multifaceted tribute is thanks to the brilliance and generosity of each speaker, as well as to the unique inspiration of Natalie herself.

For three hours, nearly a hundred people listened raptly to one engrossing presentation after another, some sitting comfortably, others standing on the edges of a packed auditorium on the Princeton University campus. Wishing to preserve what we knew would be a memorable event, we asked the university's staff to film the workshop.³ But knowing that each speaker had labored over a written text, we also wanted to make sure these would be available in readable form. We are grateful to David Bell for suggesting that we reach out to *H-France Salon*, and to its editors, Patrick Bray and Jennifer Heuer, for their enthusiastic response. We could not be more pleased

¹ The program and videos of each presentation are available at <https://earlymod.fas.harvard.edu/conferences>

² Each of them is a renowned scholar with close ties to Princeton University, IAS, and Natalie Davis, and for that reason only those ties are mentioned in their brief biographical sketches. Lucette Valensi, Professor Emerita at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris, a Member of the School of Social Sciences at IAS in 1976–77 and of the School of Historical Studies in 1990–91, as well as a Fellow at the Davis Center in 1987, was one of the original speakers but had to cancel her participation once the workshop was rescheduled.

³ The videos of both sessions of the workshop are available at <https://www.ias.edu/news/workshop-celebrating-natalie-zemon-davis> and <https://history.princeton.edu/news-events/news/natalie-zemon-davis-workshop>

knowing that these essays are now accessible to all online, free of any paywall. We also thank Ann Blair for her last-minute help in locating some references.

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Lorraine Daston recently retired as Director of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin and remains a Visiting Professor in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. From 1983 to 1986 she was Assistant Professor of History and History of Science at Princeton University. She is currently a member of the Board of Trustees of the Institute for Advanced Study.

Natalie Zemon Davis is the Henry Charles Lea Professor of History Emerita at Princeton University and Professor of History at the University of Toronto. She was a Member of the School of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study in 1978.

Anthony T. Grafton is the Henry Putnam University Professor of History at Princeton University, where he has been teaching since 1975. He succeeded William Jordan as Director of the Davis Center from 1999 to 2003.

William Chester Jordan is the Dayton-Stockton Professor of History at Princeton University, where he has been teaching since 1973. He succeeded Natalie Davis as Director of the Davis Center from 1994 to 1999, and paid tribute to her in 2011 when he delivered the annual Natalie Zemon Davis Lectures at the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary.

Joan Wallach Scott is Professor Emerita in the School of Social Science at the Institute of Advanced Study, where she served on the faculty from 1985 to 2014. In November 2018, she delivered the annual Natalie Zemon Davis Lectures at the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary.

Bonnie G. Smith is Board of Governors Distinguished Emeritus Professor of History at Rutgers University-New Brunswick. She was a Fellow at the Davis Center under Natalie's directorship and taught at Princeton University as a visiting professor for a number of semesters.

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